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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 06MANAGUA1571, BOAQUENOS TALK ELECTIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, FEAR

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06MANAGUA1571</a>	<a href="#">2006-07-18 22:06</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Managua</a>

Appears in these articles:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 001571

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: BOAQUENOS TALK ELECTIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, FEAR  
ORTEGA VICTORY

REF: MANAGUA 0399

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Peter Brennan. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During Ambassador's recent trip to Boaco, interlocutors fretted that Sandinista (FSLN) leader Daniel Ortega may win the November election by excluding large numbers of potential voters and committing fraud on Election Day. While Boaco is a predominately Liberal department, the FSLN made inroads here when "Boaquesnos" elected an apolitical mayor running on the FSLN ticket. After visiting a USAID model school, Ambassador met with local leaders of Eduardo Montealegre's Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN); Edmundo Jarquin's Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS); Movimiento por Nicaragua (MpN) and Etica y Transparencia (ET); the six mayors of Boaco department; the PLC-dominated Ranchers' Association; and, Vicar Juan Moreira. The Ambassador was also interviewed by center-right Radio Oxigeno and met with local Peace Corps volunteers. Ambassador reiterated our commitment to helping Nicaraguans hold clean, fair, inclusive, and credible elections and our view that Nicaraguans stand at a crossroads where they can choose the path of progress, including the benefits of CAFTA and the Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC). END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) During Ambassador's July 13 trip to Boaco department (population 150,500), most interlocutors fretted that FSLN leader Daniel Ortega may win the November election by excluding large numbers of potential voters and through electoral fraud the day of the polls. While Boaco is a predominately Liberal department, the FSLN made inroads when in 2004 "Boaquesnos" elected an apolitical mayor running on the FSLN ticket. After visiting and delivering curricular materials to USAID's model "Excellence" Juanita Sovalbarro Suarez Elementary School, Ambassador met with local leaders of Eduardo Montealegre's ALN; Edmundo Jarquin's MRS; NGOs MpN and ET; Boaco department mayors; the PLC-dominated Ranchers' Association; and, father Juan Moreira, Vicar of Boaco's Diocese. The Ambassador was also interviewed by center-right Radio Oxigeno and met with local Peace Corps volunteers.

A UNITED ALN CRAVES MANAGUA ATTENTION AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT  
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¶3. (C) Leaders of Eduardo Montealegre's diverse alliance in Boaco -- including members of "Vamos con Eduardo" and the ALN, as well as representatives from the Conservative (PC), Resistance (PRN), Alliance for the Republic (APRE), and Independent Liberal (PLI) parties, presented a united front. Group leader Hugo Barquero (ALN) underscored the importance of uniting under a common cause: winning the November elections and ending the corruption of FSLN-PLC pact.

According to Barquero, about 70% of Boaco voters are Liberals, and while ALN support is strong in the city of Boaco, the PLC continues to dominate in most of the department's rural areas. The fact that Montealegre's running mate is from San Jose de los Remates is an advantage the ALN must exploit, he said. He noted that ALN party poll monitors (fiscales) were present in all voting centers during the recent voter registry verification process. IRI training in late July-early August will further prepare the fiscales, said Barquero.

¶4. (C) Despite these advantages, the ALN campaign is off to "a soft start" because the lack of logistical support -- including vehicles, fuel, party banners, and funds for radio spots -- is hampering efforts to woo voters, warned Barquero. For example, the ALN needs banners and other campaign materials to use during the Boaco festivities starting July 21. While acknowledging that the PLC presents formidable competition in Boaco's rural areas, Emigdio Alvarado (PLI) explained that the FSLN is the real enemy to beat. However, as an adversary, the PLC is also a challenge. U.S. pressure on Aleman and his inner circle could help loosen the PLC's popularity, suggested Barquero. The Ambassador clarified that our problem with the PLC is Aleman and his cohorts, not Rizo and that our efforts in isolating Aleman have been robust -- including visa revocations.

THE MAYOR OF ALL PEOPLE  
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¶5. (C) The Ambassador met privately with Boaco Mayor Vivian Orozco, an apolitical, wealthy rancher who won on the Sandinista ticket. Orozco was receptive to the Ambassador's concerns that non-FSLN supporters have difficulty obtaining national/voter IDs (cedulas). However, he justified his

non-involvement in the issue because the Supreme Electoral Council's (CSE) independence must be respected. Ambassador urged him to reconsider -- noting that it is incumbent upon all public officials to ensure their constituents can exercise their right to vote. (NOTE: Other interlocutors offered nothing but praise for Orozco's fine work, lauding his non-partisan treatment of Boaquenos and his efforts to improve infrastructure, including building roads.)

ONE PLC MAYOR SET TO JUMP SHIP  
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¶6. (C) The Ambassador met briefly with Santa Lucia Mayor Elba Maria Salinas before his general meeting with PLC and APRE mayors. A disgruntled and disillusioned Salinas informed the Ambassador of her plans to leave the PLC and join Eduardo Montealegre's ALN. She explained that the PLC has virtually ostracized her because she refused to hire municipal employees in accordance to their loyalty to the PLC. Instead, she has hired people who were most qualified for the positions. According to Salinas the Liberal vote in her district is evenly split between Montealegre and Rizo. She feared that a split Liberal vote will advantage Ortega, although she also claimed that Sandinista mayor Vivian Orozco privately supports Montealegre, not Ortega.

PRO-ALEMAN AND PRO-MONTEALEGRE MAYORS SHARE COMMON CONCERNS .  
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¶7. (C) In the Ambassador's joint meeting with four PLC mayors (Elba Maria Salinas, Rolando Ruiz, Leonel Leonidas, and William Hernandez), a PLC councilman (Juan Obando), and one APRE mayor (Carlos Cajina), problems with cedula issuance and fears that the CSE will forbid Nicaraguans from voting in their area of residence dominated the conversation. While Ruiz acknowledged that Montealegre enjoys considerable popularity in Boaco, he predicted that most Liberals will mark PLC box number 1 on the ballot, as they always have. Cajina opined that the fact that his brother Fabricio is Montealegre's running mate will give Montealegre an advantage

in Boaco. He added, however, that the most crucial goal is to ensure Ortega does not win the election; issues regarding Montealegre versus Rizo are secondary. Obando focused on the high unemployment among the department's youth, explaining that only five out of 100 high school graduates continue on to university, and very few university graduates can find gainful employment in Boaco. Thus, many young professionals migrate to the United States to find work.

. . . WHILE RANCHERS' ASSOCIATION LEADERS ARE CLEARLY  
ARNOLDISTA

18. (C) The three representatives of Boaco's Ranchers Association -- Luis Ortega Urbina, Miguel Somoza, and Gil Salvador Granja -- are unabashed Arnoldistas, claiming that Rizo will draw the lion's share of the department's rural votes. They acknowledged, however, that Montealegre could attract enough votes, but mainly from elites and Conservatives, to allow Ortega to win the election. According to these die-hard PLC ranchers, the U.S. efforts to end caudillo rule in Nicaragua are misplaced and have encouraged the Liberal division. Caudillo leadership remains the norm in Nicaraguan communities, argued Somoza, who added that change in Nicaragua's political culture must be gradual.

19. (C) The Ambassador remarked that the two caudillos have divided power at the expense of, and detriment to, the country. Aleman has gradually handed over control to Ortega, and Nicaragua is suffering the consequences, including allowing a presidential candidate to win with 35% of the votes. Ortega Urbina countered that President Bolanos must share the blame for the continuation of the FSLN-PLC pact. By isolating Aleman, Bolanos divided the National Assembly's Liberal votes, preventing the Liberals from reforming the Constitution and "oxygenizing" the FSLN. The ranchers also complained of foreign assistance to Sandinista NGOS, but they were at a loss for words when the Ambassador suggested the PLC form more civil society groups. (COMMENT: Aleman empowered Ortega long before Bolanos' election. The PLC often complains of Sandinista dominance over civil society groups, but appears unwilling to establish its own NGOs.)

MRS ENTHUSED, BUT PENNILESS

110. (C) Local MRS leaders -- including National Assembly candidates Francisco Gutierrez Espinoza, and Noelia Guerrero; legal representative Frank Gutierrez; and, local party coordinators William Cuadra Lopez and Freddy Coronado -- were understandably still affected by Herty Lewites' recent death.

However, they were determined to carry on with his legacy and confident that their party will attract a sizable number of both traditionally FSLN and undecided voters. After all, argued Cuadra, the MRS is not only Herty. Its project offers to combat corruption and poverty within a democratic, tolerant, and pragmatic framework. Gutierrez added that Carlos Mejia Godoy's candidacy will likely attract more Sandinista voters. The MRS leaders were confident that they have enough party poll watchers (fiscales) to defend the vote on November 5 and appreciated IRI's training of their fiscales. Further many MRS fiscales were previously FSLN poll watchers, who know the "tricks." The lack of campaign funds was the MRS's greatest concern, ventured Gutierrez Espinoza. And, like their ALN and PLC counterparts, MRS leaders complained that the CSE facilitates cedula applications of citizens affiliated with the FSLN, while it stalls on the applications of others.

111. (C) To the Ambassador's observation that many center-right Nicaraguans claim the MRS is the FSLN's "Trojan Horse" to ensure an Ortega victory and their concerns that many of Lewites' inner circle are Sandinista "comandantes," Gutierrez Espinoza replied that the MRS holds different views from the FSLN vis a vis relations with the United States and economic policy. While the MRS seeks positive relations with

the United States and is committed to an open economy, Ortega prefers a confrontational relationship with the U.S. and a closed economy, explained Espinoza, who added that most Nicaraguans seek "social pragmatism," not outmoded ideology. Gutierrez asserted that the FSLN is not democratic because it rejects change. Guerrero noted that many MRS supporters, herself included, had broken with the FSLN some time ago. Rather, Herty articulated the desires of many anti-Ortega Sandinistas. The MRS is attracting former PLC militants, and other non-Sandinistas, as it is a change-oriented movement that appeals to the poor, small producers, youth, and women, asserted Gutierrez Espinoza.

¶12. (C) The Ambassador reiterated Assistant Secretary Shannon's recent statement encouraging Nicaraguans to move beyond the traditional caudillo-style political party leadership and replace it with truly democratic parties. He assured the MRS leaders that the United States can work with right or left-leaning governments so long as they govern under democratic practices, establish reasonable economic policies, and cooperate with the United States to combat trafficking and terrorism. Eager to distance himself from the FSLN, Espinoza asserted that MRS break with Ortega is permanent and that "democracy is not the patrimony of anyone." "To rescue Sandinismo and end the pact, we must finish with Daniel Ortega," asserted Cuadra.

#### CLAMOR FOR CEDULAS

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¶13. (C) Movimiento por Nicaragua (MpN) local representative Javier de Jesus Alonso and Etica y Transparencia (ET) coordinator Alejandro Perez Cerda concurred that the FSLN-dominated CSE is manipulating cedula issuance to its benefit and voiced concern that Nicaraguans who did not verify their presence on the voter roster (padron) may not be able to vote. ALN, MRS, PLC, and NGO contacts also complained over the FSLN's "hold" over cedula issuance. Montealegre supporter Emigdio Alvarado (PLI) claimed that of the ALN's 17,000 affiliates in Boaco, 30% do not possess a cedula and attributed this fact to instructions from the FSLN-controlled CSE in Managua to block cedula issuance to all but FSLN supporters. When ALN supporters apply at the local CSE office, they are confronted with all sorts of obstacles that impinge on their ability to obtain the prized document, e.g., applicants are told that their photo is of poor quality, that their birth certificates are fraudulent. Nicaraguan youth are especially disadvantaged, and the youth vote could determine the outcome of the November election, argued Barquero. The Ambassador urged all interlocutors to document these irregularities and present them to the OAS, the EU, and the Carter Center and to draw on civil society and the media to pressure the CSE.

#### MEDDLING

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¶14. (C) To Ambassador's query regarding his engagement in Nicaragua, Montealegre supporters opined that the Ambassador should be even stronger in his support for Nicaragua's democracy. Barquero (ALN) argued that Venezuelan President Chavez, who openly endorses Ortega, is the true meddler in Nicaragua's domestic affairs. Alvarado (PLI) opined that the USG's association with Montealegre helps more than hurts the campaign, as most Liberal Nicaraguans, especially rural voters, are interested in the U.S. perspective. PLC mayor Rolando Ruiz remarked that the U.S. Embassy role is important and can foster democracy in Nicaragua and differentiated between helpful suggestions and unhelpful impositions. PLC ranchers opined that U.S. support for democracy is welcome, while favoring a particular party is not. MRS leader Espinoza believed that the current level of U.S. engagement is appropriate, adding that too much U.S. aggression could work in Ortega's favor. In meetings the Ambassador clarified that the USG does not finance particular parties or candidates; rather, we are contributing over USD 12 million towards civic education, cedula issuance, and fiscal and



observer support and training.

CAFTA CAN HELP, BUT GIVE US ROADS, JOBS, AND KEEP UP THE  
REMITTANCES

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¶15. (C) Invariably, interlocutors cited the department's substantial reliance on remittances to keep the local economy minimally afloat. And, while most were enthused about the opportunities CAFTA offers, they cited the lack of infrastructure, particularly roads and electricity, as limitations to competing in CAFTA. For Boaquenos, the area's lack of roads is the "Achilles heel" of Cafta because it limits the ability of producers to transport their products to market before they spoil (Boaco produces meat, dairy products, and fruit and vegetables, including some coffee.) Some opined that if the roads are fixed, CAFTA-related investment will pour in, and with it unemployment will drop. Other concerns included the lack of access to health care, housing, and job training.

¶16. (C) To the Ambassador's suggestion that local taxes be used to build roads, PLC Mayor Ruiz replied that property taxes could be used but since there are no taxes on dairy, beef, and chicken production, the revenues are limited. However, he acknowledged that some local producers could be persuaded to contribute to road construction to supplement Ministry of Transport and Development Fund (FISE) monies. He mentioned that the Mayor of Boaco is currently engaged in this type of cooperative effort, combining local contributions with national funds to build roads. Ruiz added that tolls could be charged to cover maintenance costs. PLC Mayor Cajina remarked that if Nicaraguans were not always campaigning for one election or another, they would have more time to resolve development issues.

¶17. (C) The Ambassador noted that since CAFTA implementation, Nicaraguan exports to the United States have increased 30%. He highlighted the basic recipe for CAFTA success: rule of law, human capital, and infrastructure, and encouraged Boaquenos to take advantage of U.S. assistance programs in the department -- including dairy and coffee production assistance, education, health care, road rehabilitation, and judicial sector strengthening -- to help Boaco compete. Ruiz noted that his district, Camoapa, has benefited greatly from USAID assistance in the dairy industry. According to many of the interlocutors, including the Mayor of Boaco and PLC Councilman Obando, the area is ripe for a free trade zone, as it is close to Managua and is situated between Managua and the southern area of the Atlantic Coast. A free trade zone might provide these professionals with a reason to stay, suggested Obando. The Ambassador suggested that Boaquenos approach Pro Nicaragua for help with the tax free zone initiative.

VICAR FAVORS PARTIES OF CHANGE

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¶18. (C) Vicar Juan Moreira shared the concerns of other interlocutors over the difficulties non-FSLN supporters face in obtaining cédulas and the fears that the FSLN is prepared to win the election at all costs. He noted that Archbishop

Brenes will release a Church communique calling for free, fair, and credible elections. However, he was optimistic because this election presents new choices and opportunities that he hopes Boaquenos will support in November.

BRENNAN